

# TB and Wat Hmong Refugees

## - Information for Anchor Families -

### What you need to know

- About 2,100 refugees from the Wat refugee camp have already come to Wisconsin. About 1,000 more people from the camp should be coming to Wisconsin in the future.
- Refugees who come to the U.S. are checked for TB twice: before and after they come to Wisconsin.
- When a doctor has a patient with active TB, they must tell the health department about it. Wisconsin law requires this so that the health department can help stop TB from spreading to other people.
- Local health departments help to make sure that a person with TB gets the best treatment and does not expose other people. They also check to see if the person has spread TB to other people at home, work, or school.
- The health department and doctor will not give other people information about anyone with TB without their permission.
- TB can be cured when people with TB take all their medicine.
- Treating people in the Wat camp for TB **before** they come to the U.S. will help to protect people in Wisconsin and the Wat camp. This will take time.

### How much TB is in Wisconsin?

About 85 people in Wisconsin develop active TB every year. In 2004, 4 cases were in persons from the Wat camp. That person is getting the medical care they need. Because of how TB grows, more people from the Wat camp might become sick with TB after coming to the U.S.

### Refugees who come to Wisconsin are checked for TB

All refugees are checked for TB and other contagious diseases (diseases that can spread to other people) before they come to the U.S. They are also checked after they arrive in Wisconsin.

### When will my family from the Wat camp be able to come to Wisconsin?

We hope to have more information about this soon. Everyone at the Wat camp will now be checked very carefully for TB before they can come. Anyone who has active TB will be given medicine. These people will need to stay in the camp until they finish TB treatment.

### TB at the Wat camp

There are refugee camps in many countries, including Thailand. All people living in refugee camps must be checked for TB before they can come to the U.S.

Doctors at the Wat camp expected to find some people with TB disease, because it is common. But doctors found many more people with TB than they expected to find.

Because the TB germ is very strong, a person with TB must take several different pills to kill the TB. Treatment lasts at least 6 to 9 months. This will help protect the Hmong families here.

Some of the people have a type of TB germ that is harder to treat. This is called “multidrug-resistant TB.” People with multidrug-resistant TB must take medicines for a longer time.

### What is TB?

TB is a serious disease that is caused by a germ (bacteria). The TB germ can attack any part of the body, but it is usually in the lungs.

TB occurs in 2 phases: **latent** and **active**. The first phase is latent TB, which cannot spread to others. **Latent TB** can last for several months or even decades. About 10% of people with latent TB develop active TB at some point in their lives.

**Active TB** is mainly a lung disease. But it can also occur in other parts of the body. TB in other parts of the body can't spread to other people.

There are medicines to treat both **latent** and **active** TB. If a person with active TB does not take TB medicine, they can get very sick and even die.

## How is TB spread?

TB can spread when someone with **active TB** in the lungs coughs and others breathe in the TB germs. TB does not spread easily or quickly. Usually, it takes several hours of close contact over several days for TB to spread to others. It is very hard for young children to spread TB, even if TB is in their lungs. This is because there are not many TB germs in their lungs and they don't have a strong cough.

You can't get TB from shaking hands or from food, dishes, linens, or other objects. People with **latent TB** cannot spread TB to other people.

## What are the symptoms of TB?

People with **active TB** may have 1 or more of these **symptoms**:

- Coughing for 3 weeks or longer
- Losing weight
- Poor appetite
- Sweating at night
- Fever
- Chills
- Feeling tired or weak
- Pain in the chest
- Coughing up blood or brown-colored material from the lungs

Some people with active TB don't feel very sick. Young children can get very sick with TB very quickly.

## Is there treatment for TB?

Yes. People with TB need to see a doctor and take special TB medicines to kill the TB germs and cure the disease.

## If someone from the Wat camp develops TB after they come to Wisconsin, will they get sent back to the Wat?

No. If a person from the Wat camp gets sick with TB here in Wisconsin, they will be treated here. They won't be sent back to the Wat camp.

## How can you help protect Hmong families from TB?

The health department wants to help. We don't want TB to spread to your family or other people.

If you or your children are exposed to someone who has active TB, the health department will contact you to give a TB test.

If you or anyone in your family has the symptoms of TB, contact your doctor or your local health department for help.

If someone from your clinic or the health department asks you to help find someone you know so that they can get tested for TB, please help them.

The health department and doctor will not give information about anyone with TB without their permission.

You can also help by telling your friends and the rest of your family about this information.

A person with active TB must receive treatment in order to get better. Getting treatment is the only way that people with TB at the Wat camp will be allowed to travel to the U.S. Please encourage your family members with TB to take their medicine.

## Questions about TB?

- Go to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention's TB web page](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/pubs/pem.htm): <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/pubs/pem.htm>
- Go to the [Wisconsin Division of Public Health's TB web page](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/tb): <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/tb>
- Call your local health department. You can find a list of [County/City Health Departments](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/) at the Department of Health and Family services website: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/>
- Call your doctor.
- Call the Wisconsin Division of Public Health's TB Program at 608/266-9692.